



The efforts of the U.S. Navy will brighten the day for the elderly of Centro Kibrihacha

The U.S. Navy frigate USS McInerney and its crew visited Aruba for some R & R from March 27 to 31, and while taking some time off, members of the crew took time to interact with their island hosts. As part of a program maintained by the U.S. Navy with most of their ports of call, the Community Relations Coordinator for the McInerney, Chief Petty Officer Eric Smith, arranged for a team of volunteers to spend an afternoon devoted to one of Aruba's charitable organizations.

The beneficiary of the kindness and hard work of the team of volunteers was the Centro Kibrahacha in Piedra Plat. Centro Kibrihacha is a social center maintain by the Rotary Club of Aruba that provides workshops, classes and social contact that helps to keep the island's elderly active and mentally acute.

The USS McInerney, according to an official release from the U.S. Consulate General in Curacao, "is on the last portion of a highly successful counter –narcotics deployment to the Caribbean and Eastern Pacific. While on patrol, the McInerney seized 17.35 tons of contraband totaling an estimated worth of \$510 million and apprehended 21 drug traffickers. Also of note, the McInerney made history by conducting the first multi-national boarding with the Costa Rican Coast Guard and was greeted by numerous Costa Rican dignitaries for the momentous contraband and detainee exchange."

Chief Petty Officer Smith explained that a community interaction such the labor donated to Centro Kibrahacha is "very rewarding" and the crew members participating enjoy the opportunity to meet and get to know the people of the countries they visit in this way. Such projects usually take place about once a month. He recalls a major project for two orphanages in Panama that required not only painting, but major repairs. He recounts that even though the Spanish of the crewmembers was not very good, somehow they and the orphans, who displayed a great deal of curiosity about the navy men, communicated. A number of the team expressed that for them, it was one of the most "touching" projects in which they had participated, and they confessed to ending their time there playing soccer with the young children, and that such experiences makes the Navy Community Relations Program "very rewarding" for them.

On Friday afternoon, March 30, the twelve-man team, who all volunteered their free time while in Aruba to spruce up the rooms of the center, arrived energized and ready to work. Showing typical U.S. military efficiency and teamwork, they made it short work to replace the faded walls of the center with fresh paint. The team included Command Master Chief Brian Dovey, and Lieutenant-Commander Wade Harris along with Bill Rodriguez, Michael Simons, Jason Marmon, Ruben Hilario, Terrel Jenkins and Cedric "The Entertainer" LeSure. The sailors hailed from different parts of the U.S., were of varying ranks, and ranged from career officers to enlisted men.

Director of Centro Kibrihacha, Diane Uchtmann was very grateful for the offer and the labor of the U.S. Navy men, and now the social hall and a number of classrooms at the center have a fresh new coat of bright yellow paint, which will certainly help to brighten the day of the center's members!